UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7
4 February 2000

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH/FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Regional Preparatory Meeting on the
2000 Review of Implementation of the
Beijing Platform for Action
19-21 January 2000

REPORT

A. Introduction

1. At its fifty-fourth session the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) decided to convene an expert meeting at the intergovernmental level, at the request of the General Assembly, in order to provide a regional assessment for the 2000 review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

2. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held in Geneva from 19-21 January 2000.

3. It was organized in partnership with the Council of Europe, European Commission, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Preparations for the Meeting were also made in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in order to ensure the link between this regional review and the global review process.

4. Prior to the Meeting, an NGO Working Session was held from 17-18 January 2000. The report and recommendations of the Working Session are annexed to this report (Annex II).

B. Attendance

5. The Meeting was attended by representatives of 51 ECE member States and the European Community (EC).

6. Representatives of the Holy See participated under Article VIII of the Commission's terms of reference.

7. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations were in attendance.

8. Some 600 representatives of 252 non-governmental organizations attended in accordance with the Guidelines for NGO Participation in the ECE Regional Meeting on Beijing+5 adopted by the Commission at its special session of 16 December 1999.

9. A complete list of participants can be found in document E/ECE/RW.2/2000/INF.1 and E/ECE/RW.2/2000/INF.1/CORR.1.

C. Opening session (agenda item 1)

10. The Meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary of ECE, Mr. Yves Berthelot.

D. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

11. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson: Ms. Patricia Flor (Germany)

Vice-Chairpersons: Ms. Rusudan Beridze (Georgia); Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferenčić (Croatia); Ms. Patricia Schulz (Switzerland); and Ambassador Linda Tarr-Whelan (United States of America).

12. Introductory statements were made by Ms. Patricia Flor, Chairperson of the Meeting; Ms. Danuta Hübner, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECE, who read a message from Angela King, United Nations Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women; Ms. Yakin Ertürk, Director, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women; Ms. Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission; Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM; Ms. Odile Sorgho-Moulinier, Director, UNDP European Office, who read a statement by the UNDP Administrator, Mr. Mark Malloch Brown; Mr. Pierre-Henri Imbert, Director-General for Human Rights, DG II, Council of Europe; Ms. Renate Bloem, Chairperson of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women; and Mr. Yves Berthelot, Executive Secretary of ECE.

E. Adoption of the Agenda (agenda item 3)

13. The Meeting adopted its agenda and organization of work (E/ECE/RW.2/2000/1).

F. Thematic Debates

14. The Meeting was organized around the four substantive issues on the agenda. Each session or sub-session was introduced by three or four panellists consisting of at least one expert from a Government, one from an NGO and one independent expert on the relevant subject. Each introduction was followed by an open debate between participants and panellists.

Women and the economy (agenda item 4)

15. Chaired by: Ms. Patricia Flor (Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists:
Ms. Sheila Regehr, Economic Policy Coordinator, Status of Women, Canada;
Ms. Eva Ruminska-Zimny, Associate Professor, Warsaw School of Economics, Poland;
Ms. Oksana Kisselyova, "Mama' 86", Ukraine.

Women and violence (agenda item 5)

(a) Domestic violence and trafficking in women

16. Chaired by: Ms. Rusudan Beridze, (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting).
Panellists: Ms. Ruth Dreifuss, Federal Counsellor, Interior Federal Department, Switzerland; Mr. Göran Lindberg, Chief Commissioner of the Uppsala County Police Department, Expert Adviser on Gender Equality for the Government of Sweden; Ms. Charlotte Bunch, President of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, United States.

(b) Violence against women in war/conflict situations

17. Chaired by Ambassador Linda Tarr-Whelan (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting).
Panellists: Ms. Laura Balbo, Minister of Equal Opportunities, Italy; Ms. Marijana Grandits, Former MP, Political Scientist, Austria; Ms. Jadranka Milicevic, Member of Managing Board, Zene Zenama, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Women in Black, Yugoslavia.

Women in power and decision-making (agenda item 6)

18. Chaired by Ms. Patricia Schulz (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists:
Ms. Françoise Gaspard, Former Parliamentarian, Representative of France to the Commission on the Status of Women, France; Ms. Joanna Regulska, Professor at the Rutgers University, United States of America; Ms. Galina Sillaste, President of International Association "Women and Development", Russian Federation; Ms. Katia Ivanisevic, Speaker, Chamber of Counties, Croatia.

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (agenda item 7)

19. Chaired by Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferenčić (Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting). Panellists: Ms. Vera Kosmik, Director, Women's Policy Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia; Ms. Mieke Verloo, Professor of Women's Studies, Faculty of Policy Sciences, University of Nijmegen, Netherlands; Ms. Annette Lawson, Chair, National Alliance of Women's Organizations, United Kingdom.

G. Adoption of the report and the agreed conclusions (agenda item 8)

20. The Meeting adopted its report and the agreed conclusions which will provide a European input for a special session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" to be held in June 2000 in New York.

21. The agreed conclusions are annexed to this report (Annex I).

ANNEX I

AGREED CONCLUSIONS

PREAMBLE

We, the Governments participating in the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, reaffirm our commitment to the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in their entirety and to the full implementation of all twelve critical areas of concern.

We also confirm that the primary responsibility for the full implementation of these commitments rest with the Governments and that the promotion of equality between women and men is a matter of priority for the international community.

We recognize that, as stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, women's rights are human rights. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the provisions contained in the international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We consider that the human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and must therefore be promoted, protected and realized at all stages of the life cycle - childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age - and must further reflect the full diversity of women, recognizing that many women face additional barriers because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic class or status as indigenous people, migrants, displaced people or refugees.

We realize that every individual and the international community as a whole have a basic responsibility to respect the dignity of every human person, based on mutual respect and tolerance and thus to safeguard against all forms of violation, discrimination and exclusion.

We recognize that countries with economies in transition and emerging democracies remain fragile and require special attention and support, particularly to address the disproportionate negative impacts of transition processes on women's lives and livelihoods, and we affirm the right and capacity of women from these countries to play an active part in leading and managing all of their countries' development and peace processes and the need to support them in doing so.

The ECE member States will continue to overcome obstacles and undertake further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the PFA, including through the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, and promoting equal participation of women and men in all spheres of society. Such action calls for, inter alia, strengthening mechanisms for an effective implementation of legislation for gender equality, as well as a solid system of benchmarks and monitoring in order to assess progress achieved and mobilize for further action.

We recognize the important role that NGOs play in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and that it is essential that, in addition to NGOs that participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women and those with ECOSOC Consultative Status, other NGOs that address issues related to the advancement of women should be accredited to and participate in the Preparatory Committee and the UNGASS Five-Year Review of the Implementation of the Platform for Action at minimum under the same rules as those set for the Social Summit Five-Year Review.

I. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Introduction

The ECE member States reaffirm their previous commitments concerning equal participation of women and men in the economy, expressed in the past at various levels: the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the ECE Regional Platform for Action (Vienna 1994) chapters III C, D and IV C, D; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - critical areas of concern A and F; the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of action (1995); the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (1993), the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on Women and the Economy (1997) and its Resolution on Women and Poverty (1997); the ILO's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up; the ECOSOC Ministerial Communiqué entitled "The Role of Employment and Work in Poverty Eradication: the Empowerment and Advancement of Women" (1999) and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They further agree that all social, economic and trade policies should be coherent and respect existing commitments to gender equality.

Members of the Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm their previous commitments to: the 1992 EC Directive on Maternity Leave; the 1996 EC Directive on Parental Leave; the Council of Europe Recommendation R(96) 5 on reconciling work and family life (1996); the Declaration on Equality Between Women and Men as a Fundamental Criterion of Democracy (Istanbul, 1997); the Council of Europe European Social Charter and its revised European Social Charter; and the EU Council Resolutions on the 1997, 1998 and 1999 Employment Guidelines.

New opportunities:

- Increased participation of women in the labour market and subsequent gain in economic autonomy; enlargement of job opportunities for women due to structural transformation of the economy, including globalization (particularly in the services sector), self employment and entrepreneurship; growing public awareness and support for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of a developing global economy; increased opportunities to reach middle and higher level management positions in some countries; greater potential for introducing measures enabling better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities; proportion of women with university degrees sharply increased, even exceeding that of men in some disciplines; in some cases, new opportunities for longer and/or multiple careers for women as well as for access to all decision-making positions and, in particular, economic decision-making positions.

Persistent or new obstacles:

- Persistent segregated education and labour markets, confining a large proportion of women in low paid, low skill and precarious work (working poor) and admitting a very small percentage of women in decision-making positions; globalization and economic restructuring, that often result in reduced job security and social benefits; persistent wage gaps between women and men; atypical modes of employment (temporary or casual work) often not of free choice; difficulties of monitoring or enforcing labour standards in environments associated with these types of employment contracts; in most countries, weak or non-existent social protection schemes for many women in these jobs and for unemployed women; in some countries, insufficient social security measures for women during pregnancy and maternity; insufficient encouragement for men to reconcile work and family; inadequate application and monitoring of health and safety standards in temporary and casual employment; insufficient gender sensitivity in labour markets and social welfare institutions; still insufficient training and employment of women in new information and technology professions; unbalanced and self-limiting choice of vocational training leading young women to jobs with no advancement prospects or with low pay; even for women with higher education, difficulty to secure jobs commensurate with their level of skills; less opportunities for women in terms of career development and promotions; lack of mechanisms for the transmission of information about employment and social services available for women; lack of full visibility of the type, extent and distribution of unremunerated work; persistent gender stereotyping leading to unbalanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men; in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), women bearing most of the hardship induced by the economic restructuring and being the first to lose jobs in times of recession; in the same countries, women being squeezed out from fast growth sectors; loss of childcare facilities due to elimination or privatisation of state work places and increased need for elder care without the corresponding facilities; continuing inequality of access to training for finding re-employment and to productive assets for entering or expanding businesses.

In view of these trends, four major challenges can be identified, to which correspond four key areas for action in the ECE region:

A. Eliminating discrimination against women in the labour market

Strategic direction 1: Further developing and applying legislation and rules for eliminating discrimination against women in recruitment and conditions of work

ECE governments and social partners

- to review the structural, legal, and behavioural barriers preventing gender equality in the world of work - the review should cover important problem areas such as gender-based bias in recruitment; inequality of pay for equal work or work of equal value; inequality in sharing

work and family responsibilities between women and men; unequal treatment of workers' rights and benefits in terms of their application to women and men; sex differences in occupational health and safety; and unequal career opportunities (glass ceiling);

- based on the review, to work jointly and, where appropriate, in consultation with NGOs, to introduce measures for removing these obstacles and barriers. These include, for example: new codes of conduct and positive action e.g. equality plans; introducing legislation prohibiting, preventing and redressing discrimination against women in recruitment and in work conditions, including discrimination due to their reproductive roles and functions; introducing legislation providing gender balanced parental leave conditions which enable and encourage fathers, as well as mothers, to take care of children; providing training to different categories of professionals who are in strategic positions for promoting equality in the labour market; making the income tax system non-discriminatory; revising job classifications and job evaluation schemes to effectively apply the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; develop or, if necessary, strengthen strategies and preventive programmes to eliminate health and safety hazards and risks that affect women; guarantee of career development for women and men to part-time, job sharing and other forms of traditionally atypical work;

- to adopt policies and measures, including if appropriate through legislation, to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace and to promote an environment free of any gender-based hostility, intimidation or discrimination;

ECE governments, the private sector, social partners, media and NGOs

- to organize public information campaigns and debates in order to sensitize public opinion and other relevant actors on the principle of equal sharing between women and men of work and family responsibilities;

- to organize campaigns and programmes in educational institutions and in the media, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, aiming at removing stereotypes and prejudices about men's participation in family life;

ECE governments

- to ensure that bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and rules respect relevant international conventions and instruments that protect and promote gender equality.

Strategic direction 2: Eliminating gender-based vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market

ECE governments, the private sector and social partners

- to analyse and respond to the major reasons why men and women are affected differently by the process of job creation and job elimination associated with economic transition and structural transformation of the economy, including globalization;

- to develop and implement measures that eliminate professional segregation against women, in particular women with specific needs, by facilitating their access to jobs corresponding to their skills as well as developing adequate professional training to promote their social and professional integration and progression;

- to pay particular attention to recruiting women in those high-growth and high-wage occupations which are traditionally dominated by men e.g. finance, the technology sector and engineering;

- to review the criteria used for recruitment and promotion of women and men in decision-making positions in order to eliminate discriminatory barriers and devise measures to effectively promote women to decision-making positions;

ECE governments and social partners

- to offer encouragement to employers, inter alia by introducing positive action measures to recruit and promote women in decision-making positions;

- to remove barriers to unionization of women as a critical component to obtaining real gains for women workers in all areas;

ECE governments and educational institutions in ECE countries

- to develop gender-sensitive curricula, from kindergartens and elementary schools to vocational training and universities, in order to address gender stereotyping as a major root cause of segregation in the working life;

- to increase accessibility to post-secondary education for persons, in particular women, with dependants and/or low income and/or from disadvantaged groups through initiatives such as grants, scholarships or sponsored training programmes;

- to develop vocational training in order to overcome the horizontal and vertical gender-based segregation of the labour market;

- to complement the above educational programmes with programmes through the media and also encourage the media to develop programmes that promote gender equality

Strategic direction 3: Establishing a sound system of monitoring and evaluation

ECE governments

- to set up and apply indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved in terms of equal participation of women and men in the labour market and in family life;

- to regularly report to parliaments on the trends, obstacles and good practices regarding equal participation of women and men in the labour market, in family and in society as a whole.

B. Increasing employment opportunities for women

Strategic direction 1: Developing the employability of women

ECE governments and social partners

- to develop a set of policies and programmes providing access to specific training, life-long learning and retraining, including in information and communication technology, which would be tailored to women's needs according to the different stages of their lives and of family formation,

- to encourage the education of girls in science, mathematics, new technologies of information and technical subjects from upper secondary school level upwards and to encourage women to consider employment in high-growth and high-wage sectors and jobs;

Strategic direction 2: Fostering women's access to self-employment and entrepreneurship

ECE governments

- to facilitate self-employment for women through fiscal measures and adequate social protection, simplification of administrative procedures and other measures (such as access to risk capital, credit schemes and other funding) facilitating the establishment of micro enterprises and SMEs;

ECE governments, the private sector, social partners and NGOs

- to strengthen entrepreneurial skills for women through training, retraining, special education programmes and comprehensive advisory and support services;

ECE governments, international financial institutions, the private sector, social partners and NGOs

- to provide technical and financial support to organizations assisting and training women entrepreneurs in creating SMEs,

- to ensure equal access to credits, in particular through gender awareness-raising among bankers and others influencing access to credit,

- to extend the outreach so as to increase awareness of existing programmes available for women entrepreneurs and business owners;

- to promote a gender balance in trade delegations and ensure that the interests of women entrepreneurs are fully taken into account.

Strategic direction 3: Supporting women's employment

ECE Governments, private sector and social partners

- to enact policies to enable women and men to balance paid and unpaid work and fulfil family responsibilities with particular attention to those who have specific difficulties in achieving this balance;

- to introduce negotiable flexible working time to enable women and men to equally share and balance their paid and unpaid work responsibilities;

- to promote new schemes addressing the needs of society to provide care for those who require it, in particular for children, the elderly, and those with illness or with disabilities;

- to encourage government support for a range of options to enable women and men to best meet the care needs of their children and other dependants and to promote appropriate schemes to support full-time caregivers when they decide to enter or re-enter the labour market.

C. Promoting gender equality in social protection

Strategic direction 1: Developing a new approach to social protection in response to new trends in employment (the rise of atypical jobs, increased work flexibility) and the changing needs for dependent care in society

ECE governments and social partners

- to provide adequate maternity protection to all women;

- to consider extending and/or redesigning social benefits (e.g. health and pension) to those part-time, temporary and other workers, including those in agriculture, who are not covered or insufficiently covered by existing schemes;

- to review unemployment insurance in order to consider extending it to those not currently covered or insufficiently covered, such as temporary, part-time and home-based workers and agricultural workers;

ECE governments, social partners, local authorities and NGOs

- to build up partnerships, where appropriate, to support social protection schemes which, depending on their nature, objectives and coverage, would involve the social partners (trade unions and employers), welfare institutions, local authorities and NGOs.

Strategic direction 2: Ensuring adequate pension benefits for older women

ECE governments and social partners

- to find ways and means to take into account, in basic pension schemes, years of unpaid work of women and men, thus mitigating the disadvantages of those with shorter periods of paid work, most often due to care responsibilities;

- to also consider the situation of older women who have never worked for pay and develop social security schemes for them where they do not exist.

Strategic direction 3: Developing additional social protection measures to reduce social costs of transition for women in CEE and CIS countries

ECE governments and social partners

- to enhance cooperation with CEE and CIS countries in order to assist them to improve and implement social protection policies aimed at combining universal coverage of social services with targeted assistance to the most vulnerable groups including women affected by the social costs of transition.

D. Empowering women through access to and control over resources

Strategic direction 1: Monitoring the gender impact of poverty eradication programmes

ECE governments, international aid agencies (including UN Funds and Programmes) and international financial institutions

- to assess the extent to which poverty eradication programmes have a positive impact on the empowerment of women living in poverty in terms of access to training and education, employment, land, income, credit, skills and social services. Such gender impact assessment should cover poverty eradication programmes and gaps in living conditions within countries;

- to define concrete changes in poverty eradication programmes in the light of the above assessment;

- to publish the results of monitoring.

Strategic direction 2: Supporting the empowerment of women

ECE governments, international aid agencies (including UN Funds and Programmes) and international financial institutions

- in view of the above assessment, to review the approach of empowerment programmes and projects in countries with economies in transition and in developing countries so that they effectively ensure women's access to and control over resources;

- to increase, or at least increase the proportion of, resources for poverty-eradication programmes aiming at the empowerment of women in these countries and networking among NGOs supporting such programmes;

- to enhance cooperation and coordination among various actors in support of programmes that empower women and contribute to their economic autonomy.

Strategic direction 3: Mainstreaming the gender perspective in macro-economic and social policies

ECE governments

- to incorporate the gender perspective in key macro-economic and social development policies and national development agendas by developing the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

II. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Introduction

The ECE member States reaffirm their previous commitments concerning violence against women expressed in the past at various levels: the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies; the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993); the ECE Regional Platform for Action (Vienna, 1994) chapters III A and IV A; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - critical area of concern D; reinforced by inter alia the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on violence against women (1998); the Addendum to the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-first Special Session of the General Assembly ("ICPD Plus Five" document) (1999).

Members of the Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm respectively their previous commitments to: the Council of Europe Ministerial Declarations and Resolutions on Strategies for the elimination of violence against women in society: the media and other means (Rome, 1993); The Hague Ministerial Declaration on the question of trafficking in women of the Member States of the EU (The Hague, 1997); and the Tampere EU Council conclusions (1999) which refer to the issue of trafficking of human beings and especially women.

Positive developments:

- Increased awareness that violence against women and girls is no longer considered a private matter but a human rights issue; increased commitment to prevent and combat violence against women and girls; improved policy and programme development including domestic violence being recognized as a criminal act in a number of countries, with an increased focus on holding the perpetrator accountable; standards and recommendations on how to tackle the problem adopted by intergovernmental bodies in the region; development of national action plans to address violence against women and girls in some ECE countries; strengthened

protection of victims and witnesses; greater awareness nationally and internationally of the problem of trafficking in women and girls; increased involvement of NGOs in strategies to address violence against women and girls; and an increase in men who assume responsibility to work to end violence against women.

Obstacles and barriers:

- Real extent of violence and insufficient protection of women and children from sexual violence, not yet completely known because of insufficient reporting and lack of comparable statistics; domestic violence, including sexual violence in marriage, still treated as a private matter in a number of ECE countries; insufficient legislation to eliminate sexual harassment and rape, including marital rape; insufficient awareness of consequences of domestic violence, how to prevent it, and the rights of victims; increase in the incidence of trafficking practices in the region; in transition economies, aggravation of the root causes of trafficking such as poverty and unemployment; expansion of the transnationally organized crime cartels; extension of traditional gendered division of labour to the global level, with women more likely to be employed in unregulated sectors such as entertainment/sex industry and domestic service, bonded sweatshop labour and other forms of forced labour; increased number of highly vulnerable groups, in particular women and girl refugees and displaced persons in the various conflict areas of the region; inadequate distribution of public resources to enable governments to undertake new activities to address violence against women and girls; social exclusion of women victims of trafficking, making them vulnerable to problems such as drugs, STDs, HIV/AIDS, rape and other forms of violence; information technology increasingly used to promote the sex industry.

In order to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, ECE member States expressed their willingness to pursue their efforts in the following key areas for action:

A. Promoting a comprehensive approach to combating all forms of violence against women and girls

Strategic direction 1: Adopting basic principles

ECE member States

- to firmly express their political will to combat all forms of gender-based violence as defined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to ensure security as a right of all citizens regardless of gender and in both private and public domains;

- to recognize that violence against women, whether in the private or the public sphere, is a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and a criminal act, and to ensure that legislation, enforcement, and punishment are commensurate with this criminality;

- to envisage adopting a policy of zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women and girls;

- to recognize that violence against girls has specific repercussions and must be addressed by building a better understanding and analysis of violence against children and minors, and ensuring implementation of appropriate legislation.

Strategic direction 2: Strengthening research, and information sharing, on violence against women and girls

ECE governments, regional and international organizations, research institutions, health care institutions and NGOs

- to promote, nationally and regionally, the sharing of research results and statistics, as well as of information on best practices and innovative measures taken in combating violence;

- to promote and support coordinated research, including the development of uniform indicators on violence against women and girls, that explores the nature, extent and consequences of violence, including the physical and mental health consequences, and analyses the impact, effectiveness and outcomes of laws relevant to combating this violence;

- to develop an international consensus on uniform indicators and ways to measure violence against women, and consider establishing a readily accessible database on statistics, legislation, training models, good practices, ethical guidelines, lessons learned and other resources with regard to all forms of violence against women.

Strategic direction 3: Working towards elimination of violence in society

ECE police authorities, judicial bodies, educational institutions, health care institutions, NGOs and the media

- to work together, in a multi-disciplinary manner, and carry out activities aimed at prevention and early intervention in cases of violence, in particular public awareness campaigns, basic education, including sex education, anti-violence curricula, programmes targeting perpetrators, and the enforcement of legislation against violence;

ECE governments

- to review and repeal all legislation that discriminates against women, and to enact, implement and strengthen legislation against all forms of violence against women and girls in both private and public domains;

- to take necessary legal measures to eradicate harmful customary and traditional practices including honour killings and female genital mutilation;

- to provide financial and other support to NGOs in their fight against violence, including for programmes to combat racist-inspired violence against women and girls;

- to review and repeal laws that criminalize homosexuality, since such laws contribute to creating a climate which encourages violence against women who are, or are perceived to be, lesbians;

ECE governments and NGOs

- to develop policies and protocols that enhance victim safety, namely by strengthening collaboration between police and NGOs, and encourage women and girls subject to violence to report to the police and to start criminal proceedings;

- to develop and continuously evaluate programmes aimed at preventing domestic violence by targeting potential perpetrators and treating them through counselling and other support;

- to consider establishing effective measures, inter alia: training of educators and professionals in the identification of women and girls at risk of violence; orientation for social support and counselling to families and children; creation of safe and protective environments where open dialogue, orientation and counselling can take place; creation of high-quality health services information and counselling, including on sexual and reproductive health, to become an integral part of the public health agenda; establishment of easily accessible, child-friendly hot-lines linked to referral services which protect confidentiality.

B. Combating domestic violence

Strategic direction 1: Making domestic violence known and treating it as a public matter

ECE governments, research institutions, health care institutions, NGOs and the media

- to recognize that domestic violence, including sexual violence and rape, is not a private matter but a human rights violation and a criminal act which gives rise to prosecution;

- to organize public campaigns to inform the public of the unacceptability of men's violence against women and undertake prevention activities to promote healthy and balanced relationships based on gender equality;

- to disseminate statistics and information on domestic violence and its impact on society, including information concerning relevant laws and possibilities of law enforcement;

ECE governments, research institutions and NGOs

- to establish uniform indicators of domestic violence and use them to monitor changes in the magnitude, forms, types of victims and circumstances of this violence.

Strategic direction 2: Developing and enforcing laws against domestic violence

ECE governments

- to consider enacting and implementing legislation that defines domestic violence against women and children to include, inter alia, incest, marital rape, so-called "honour" crimes, forced marriages and abuse of elderly women, as crimes giving rise to prosecution;

- to establish and/or strengthen legislation and regulations against all forms of domestic violence, including sexual violence, and enhance their enforcement;

- to establish clear guidelines for police and prosecutors on attitudes and behaviour in dealing with victims of domestic violence, including sexual violence, as well as clear procedures corresponding to different forms of violence in the home;

- to enhance specialized police training to handle domestic violence situations, for example by involving persons with experience of working with perpetrators of violence or with their victims and by providing training which safeguards the human rights of women;

- to step up the recruitment of women police officers;

- to provide victims of domestic violence, where possible, with access to interpreters as necessary, in the reporting process;

- to provide training to prosecutors and the judiciary to increase their sensitivity to gender issues in cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse and to ensure that the cases are dealt with in the most appropriate way;

- to ensure that the punishment for violent behaviour holds perpetrators accountable, thereby contributing to the prevention of recidivism;

ECE governments and NGOs

- to work with the criminal justice system to develop policies and protocols that enhance victim safety and encourage victims of domestic violence to report the crimes to the authorities and to start criminal proceedings.

Strategic direction 3: Providing assistance and protection to women and girls victims of violence

ECE governments

- to bring in different actors (family and criminal courts, authorities for the protection of children and young people, health authorities, women's organizations) to work together in a cooperative and multidisciplinary manner to provide practical, medical, psychological and legal support to victims of violence;

ECE governments and NGOs

- to consider providing free legal and psychological counselling for all victims of violence;

- to develop and implement programmes to support and protect children, especially girls and young women victims of violence;

- to provide shelter, medical assistance and social and psychological support for survivors of violence;

- to secure the safety of victims by enacting and enforcing legal protective measures or by removing the violent offender from the home in which the female victim lives or by providing a secure refuge for the latter.

C. Stopping trafficking in human beings, in particular women and girls

Strategic direction 1: Strengthening laws and their enforcement

ECE member States

- to condemn trafficking in all its forms as an infringement of the basic principles of human rights;

- to strengthen national legislation by further defining the crime of trafficking in all its elements, and by reinforcing the punishment accordingly, including inter alia, seizure of the proceeds of trafficking, fines and imprisonment;

- to raise awareness of the police and border authorities to the problem of trafficking and to provide them with gender-sensitive specialized training in order to identify trafficking cases and dismantle the networks responsible for these cases, as well as to properly receive and assist victims;

- to consider extending existing witness protection programmes to include victims testifying against traffickers;

ECE member States and relevant international organizations (regional and global)

- to step up international cooperation within the context of the current negotiations of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in developing a protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children and to protect trafficked persons in accordance with their human rights. Within this process, the following elements are of particular importance: agreeing on a definition of trafficking and its recognition as a national and international crime; ensuring harmonization between national legislation and the protocol and their coherence with existing regional and subregional treaties;

- to establish, where appropriate, or strengthen special anti-trafficking units (which should comprise both women and men), in particular those within law enforcement agencies, in order to promote coordination, specialization, competence and professionalism;

- to intensify cooperation between States of origin, transit and destination in investigations and judicial processes relating to trafficking. Such cooperation should be supported by an effective exchange of information, involving intergovernmental law enforcement and police organizations and, if appropriate, NGOs.

Strategic direction 2: Preventing trafficking

ECE governments and research institutions

- to examine the root causes of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, focusing on: lack of education, chronic unemployment, discrimination, lack of viable economic opportunities, feminization of poverty, negative consequences of globalization of the economy, the sex industry, sex tourism, negative images of women's sexuality, the demand side of prostitution and criminal networks and other stakeholders involved;

- to develop policies, measures and programmes aimed at eliminating this trafficking, which would: strengthen women's social and economic position, target clients and different actors involved in order to reduce the demand side, provide information and support to women involved, and increase resources to attack the problem;

ECE governments and NGOs

- in all countries, in particular in countries of origin, to promote (a) economic alternatives and opportunities for women, including micro-credit, training in business development, skills training and job counselling; (b) programmes that promote women's participation in economic decision-making; (c) programmes to keep children, especially girls, in elementary and secondary schools; (d) development of educational curricula about the dangers of trafficking; and (e) grants to NGOs to accelerate the empowerment of women in local and regional, political, economic, social and educational roles in their countries;

- to provide financial and other support to the above programmes in countries of origin;

- in countries of origin, to promote awareness among prospective female migrants and their families about the risk of being trafficked, through information activities and campaigns carried out in close cooperation with NGOs and drawing on the experience of international organizations in this field;

- to introduce measures aimed at reducing demand for trafficking, such as encouraging respect for the dignity and integrity of all persons, especially women and girls, and sensitizing the public on the infringement of human rights of these persons;

- to find ways to fight the tendency of traffickers and trafficking networks to use new technologies for circulation of supply and demand;

ECE governments

- to bring in different actors (law enforcement, immigration, social, judicial, administrative and customs departments, NGOs etc.) to work together in a cooperative and multidisciplinary manner to fight against trafficking;

- to raise awareness of personnel at consular sections of embassies about trafficking, including the identification of traffickers, and inform visa applicants through hand-outs and leaflets about the dangers of trafficking in all its forms.

Strategic direction 3: Protecting and supporting victims of trafficking

ECE governments

- to consider preventing, within the legal framework, victims of trafficking from being prosecuted for their illegal entry or residence, taking into account that they are victims of exploitation;

- to consider allowing victims of trafficking to remain within the country of destination on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, in appropriate cases;

- to provide witnesses with special support to report and file complaints designed to protect their private lives and to reduce official procedures and their traumatizing effects;

- in case of repatriation, to work closely with NGOs to ensure safe conditions of return, especially in the case of victims- turned witnesses and those at risk of being re-trafficked;

- to recognize the obligation, on the part of countries of origin, to accept the return of their nationals;

ECE governments and NGOs

- to take necessary measures for ensuring the security of the victims and their families and protecting their fundamental rights through legal, social, medical, psychological and other assistance, both as an objective per se and as a way to facilitate their cooperation for the prosecution of traffickers and for the witness protection programmes;

- to attempt to provide basic services for the victims of trafficking such as shelter and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services;

- to develop policies and programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration, both economic and social, of trafficked persons, and to allocate adequate resources for these programmes.

III. WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ARMED-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Introduction

The ECE member States reaffirm their previous commitments concerning violence against women expressed in the past at various levels: the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993); the ECE Regional Platform for Action (Vienna, 1994) chapters III A and IV A; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - critical area of concern E; reinforced by inter alia the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on women and armed conflict (1998).

Positive developments:

- Recognition of the violation of the human rights of women in armed-conflict situations as violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law; increased awareness of gender-based violence during armed conflicts; some progress in international legislation in this area; and increased acknowledgement of the importance of women participation in conflict prevention, peace-building and in post-conflict situations.

Negative developments:

- Recent armed conflicts of international and non-international character, resulting in a growing number of civilians affected, hence greater risk of women and girls being victims of gender-based violence in armed-conflict situations; particular vulnerability of disabled and displaced women and girls, elderly women and also those who are members of minority groups; despite the fact that since 1994, it has been recognized as a war crime, rape as a planned and systematic act is often used as a weapon of war, particularly in recent conflicts in Southeastern Europe; other forms of violence such as forced migration, sexual exploitation and forced prostitution; consequences of rape in terms of physical, psychological and mental trauma, forced pregnancy, greater risk of infection by HIV/AIDS and rejection by family and community; loss of adequate health conditions and reproductive rights, including availability of efficient contraception; consequences of the use of certain weapons like anti-personnel mines; in the aftermath of a war, traumas for refugees and internally displaced women and girls, in particular widows, women who have been subject to forced pregnancies, fatherless girls, mothers who have lost or have been separated from their children and single women without any state, family or kinship protection, and consequent risk of being marginalized by society; strong link between the ideologies of intolerance, ethnic cleansing and cultures that exclude women and violation of human rights as a major source of conflict; economic hardships for women due to loss of male members of the family, loss of means of subsistence, housing, property and land, and deprivation of means to make a living;

insufficient action for addressing the specific needs of women and their children during and after repatriation; in peace-building and reconstruction processes, women often continuing to be excluded from decision-making.

In view of the above situation, the following key areas for action can be identified:

A. Developing international and national legislation against gender-based violence and enhancing its implementation

Strategic direction 1: Developing, adopting and ratifying legislation

ECE governments

- to take initiatives, as appropriate, to ensure full implementation of the provisions of international legal instruments relating to gender-based violence in armed conflicts; and to consider ways to reinforce these provisions; in this context, to give particular consideration to violence against women and girls in non-international armed conflicts;

- in those countries that have not yet done so, to consider becoming party to relevant international legal instruments, and to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW;

- to review national legislation to ensure where necessary that sanctions are strengthened and prosecutions are effected against perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence both in peaceful time as well as in armed-conflict situations.

Strategic direction 2: Enhancing the implementation of legislation

ECE governments

- to adopt the necessary measures to ensure that they implement in full their international obligations with respect to the repression of war crimes and to ensure that the perpetrators of gender-based crimes are identified and prosecuted;

- to consider providing effective witness protection programmes, including after trial;

- to provide adequate training of judicial, military, peacekeeping and law enforcement personnel in the application and monitoring of international and national human rights, humanitarian and refugee law and standards and also the effect of gender-based violence on women and girls.

B. Protecting and supporting the victims of gender-based violence during and after conflict situations

Strategic direction 1: Ensuring the human rights of women and girls victims of violence in and after armed conflicts

ECE governments and NGOs

- to consider providing assistance to women and girls affected by armed conflicts to regain their status in society in political, social, economic and legal terms and recognition that women have equal inheritance rights. Particular attention to be given to women who, due to missing family members, are left in a state of uncertainty, lose their rights and are not eligible for assistance (e.g. assistance schemes for widows and single-headed households),

- to ensure that women and girls affected by armed conflicts are informed of their human rights procured under international and national international and national law, and have access at the earliest possible opportunity to legal redress against violation,

- in case of repatriation of refugees and displaced persons, to provide a safe and voluntary return with dignity to their country or home of origin, taking into account the specific needs of mothers with children, widows, elderly women and unaccompanied girls,

- to ensure that women affected by armed conflict receive as soon as possible support in order to be able to exercise their rights.

ECE governments

- to build consensus and develop a common policy to facilitate intervention in places/countries where human rights of women and girls in particular are violated,

- to apply international norms to ensure equal access and equal treatment of women and men in refugee determination procedures and the granting of asylum.

Strategic direction 2: Improving rehabilitation and reintegration programmes

ECE governments, international organizations and NGOs

- to empower women involved in all conflict situations, including women refugees and displaced women, by involving them in the design and management of humanitarian activities and ensuring, that they benefit from these programmes on an equal basis with men,

- to strengthen, or introduce where they do not exist, gender-sensitive and targeted policies and programmes to address the needs of women and girls during and after armed conflict situations;

- to further develop, after consultations with affected women and girls and women NGOs, commonly agreed guidelines for action, integrating medical, psychological and social components of assistance programmes for women and girls victims of all forms of violence, to be used by relevant governmental entities (national and local), international organizations and NGOs;

- to ensure that the sexual health and the human, reproductive and health rights of women and girls affected by armed conflict are respected, protected and fulfilled. Governments should also ensure support for women-centred health care services;

- to design and support programmes for economic reintegration in particular through skills-training and income-generation programmes;

ECE governments, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and NGOs

- to consider funding and other support for empowering women, or establishing where they do not exist, specific national/international funds for empowering women and women's organizations to contribute to building a new life for women in post-conflict periods, in particular by making available: medical, psychological and other services, shelter, legal counselling, as well as credit and skills training to enable women to regain self-reliance;

- to integrate a gender perspective into all humanitarian activities.

C. Creating an enabling environment for lasting peace

Strategic direction 1: Recognizing and promoting the role of women in all peace processes

ECE governments, international organizations and NGOs

- to recognize and increase the participation of women, including marginalized women, at all levels of decision-making and implementation in all peace processes: conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building;

- to ensure women's participation, including marginalized women, in all conflict and peace-related processes and institutions, member States are encouraged to set benchmarks, indicators, deadlines and monitoring processes;

- to bring in local women's NGOs as partners in the design and implementation of strategies, plans and concrete programmes;

- to support confidence building by strengthening civil forces, as well as peace and reconciliation groups, and in particular by fully involving women in these movements;

- in the aftermath of conflict, to encourage the involvement of women in all stages of the design, planning and implementation of post-conflict transformation as opposed to simply reconstruction, and to mainstream a gender perspective in all measures to be taken;

- to recognize that women in conflict regions are not only victims of armed conflicts, but also partners and contributors for non-violent conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking, and reconstruction.

Strategic direction 2: Promoting peace

ECE governments

- to support the reconstruction of democratic institutions in areas of armed conflicts as a basic condition for promoting equality between women and men;

ECE governments and international organizations

- to provide support for, inter alia, professional development and gender-sensitive training for women to take roles at the highest levels; coordination of NGO networks for women, youth, children and peace; conflict prevention, management and resolution centres run by gender-sensitive organizations including women's organizations; development and implementation of gender-sensitive curricula in all educational institutions;

ECE governments, research institutions and NGOs

- to promote research on and awareness of the root causes of gender-specific violence;

Governments, educational institutions, NGOs and the media

- to promote peace through public campaigns and educational programmes and foster gender-equality and non-discrimination, by opposing all forms of intolerance and racism;

- to provide support to exchange programmes of youth and students, especially those including girls, between countries and different cultures to promote mutual understanding.

IV. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Introduction

The ECE member States reaffirm their previous commitments concerning equal participation of women and men in decision making, expressed in the past at various levels: the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Inter-Parliamentary Union Plan of Action (1994); the ECE Regional Platform for Action (Vienna 1994)

chapters III E and IV E; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - critical area of concern G; reinforced by inter alia the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on Women in Power and Decision Making (1997).

Members of the Council of Europe and the European Union respectively reaffirm their previous commitments to: the Council of Europe Declaration on Equality Between Women and Men as a Fundamental Criterion of Democracy (Istanbul, 1997); the EU Council Recommendation (96/6/94) on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process; and the Paris Declaration of the Conference of the Member States of the European Union (1999).

Positive changes:

- Increase in number of women parliamentarians in those countries where awareness raising on equal participation, legislative changes and positive action have taken place; more women entering into local politics in some countries in transition as a result of democratization, decentralization and development of civil society; hence, new opportunities for these women to gain leadership skills, experience, knowledge and networking capacity and move into national politics; in most western democracies - increased women's participation in elected, governmental and other appointed bodies following implementation of tools such as targets, quotas, voluntary agreements and other positive action; such development due to the increasing awareness of gender issues, the existence of institutional mechanisms for gender equality, increased assertiveness and capabilities of women and, in some cases, greater political will; increased recognition and documentation of new knowledge and changes in politics as a result of women's participation.

Obstacles and barriers:

- Persistent prejudice and cultural attitudes that exclude women from leadership especially in some political parties (party culture of masculinity) and countries; persistence of racism, discrimination and other ideologies of intolerance leading to limited access to decision-making bodies for some women because of their cultural and ethnic background; in some countries in transition, representation of women has decreased; insufficient political will and mobilization in support of positive action and, where appropriate, target-setting to increase women's share in decision making; some electoral systems remaining unfavourable to women candidates; under-representation of women in party leadership and as a result their lower share in decision making in elected and appointed bodies; women's traditional role as caregivers, insufficient day care and family care facilities, and lack of job sharing, preventing women from increased participation in politics and other decision-making careers; persistent stereotyping including trivialization of women decision-makers and women's achievements by the media; slow movement of women into decision-making positions due to non transparent recruitment practices and current male-dominated incumbency effect; and additional barriers to women belonging to groups exposed to various discriminations such as those linked to racial or ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or because they are indigenous people.

In view of the above situation, the following key areas for action can be identified:

A. Creating an enabling environment for an increased participation of women in power and decision-making

Strategic direction 1: Promoting public awareness on the positive role and contribution of women in decision-making positions

ECE governments, parliaments, political parties, media and NGOs

- to organize public information campaigns and debates in order to raise awareness in public opinion and the constituencies of political, economic, social and cultural organizations on the principle of equal participation of women and men in decision-making;

- to introduce a gender perspective in all debates of their executive bodies on political, economic, defence/peace, social, cultural issues and encourage the participation of women experts;

ECE governments, political parties, educational institutions, media and NGOs

- to organize campaigns and programmes, including for girls and boys, aiming at removing stereotypes and prejudices about women's participation in power and decision-making, and showing the benefits of equal participation of women.

Strategic direction 2: Establishing a sound system of monitoring and evaluation

ECE governments

- to set up and apply indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the progress made through government policies in terms of equal participation of women and men in political parties and elected bodies including on the basis of internationally comparable gender disaggregated data;

- to compile research findings and information on causes of problems and successes in promoting women to higher positions and to disseminate them as widely as possible;

- to regularly submit reports to their parliaments on the trends, obstacles and positive experience of women's involvement in decision-making;

International parliamentarian bodies

- to support ECE national parliaments in ensuring an effective monitoring system for women's participation in elected bodies.

B. Fostering women's participation in political parties and elected bodies

Strategic direction 1: Furthering legislative changes and promoting positive action

ECE governments, parliaments and political parties

- to consider possible legislative changes (e.g. in the constitution or in the electoral system) which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in elected bodies aiming at full and equal participation;

- to recognize the need to include women with different backgrounds in politics at all levels in order to build representative democracy;

ECE governments and political parties

- to consider setting time-bound targets with a view to reaching equal participation of women and men in elected assemblies and at all levels of the political parties organization;

- to assess different options for the advancement of women, for example, voluntary agreements and positive action such as quotas and targets, where appropriate, and to decide on the most useful measures which will ensure equal participation of women and men in elected assemblies;

ECE governments

- to introduce, where possible, incentives for political parties to develop methods to increase the likelihood of women being elected.

Strategic direction 2: Enlarging the pool of eligible women

Political parties and NGOs

- to ensure women's access to targeted training, mentoring programmes and information about politics;

- to provide opportunities for women, including women with diverse backgrounds to gain political experience by encouraging their participation and creating positive conditions for their entry into local and regional politics as well as into national politics;

- to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of decision-making within their organizations.

C. Fostering women's participation in high-level positions in government and appointed bodies

Strategic direction 1: Setting targets and promoting positive action to reach these targets

ECE governments

- to consider setting time-bound targets for women's increased representation in government and appointed bodies aiming for their full and equal participation in these bodies;

- to encourage a continuous increase, at each renewal, of the number of women on public committees, commissions and public advisory bodies at all levels, to achieve equal participation;

- to present more women candidates at senior positions to international organizations.

Strategic direction 2: Ensuring equal opportunity in appointing processes

ECE governments

- to ensure transparency in the appointment process for high-level governmental and other bodies and to enlarge the pool of potential women candidates through an active search into existing networks of women decision-makers in relevant areas;

- to make a greater number of public office positions accessible to new actors, and, in this regard, to reach out to prospective women candidates to fill these positions.

D. Promoting women's access to high-level decision-making positions in economic and social spheres (private sector, social partners and NGOs)

Strategic direction 1: Involving women in decision-making processes

Employers, trade unions and NGOs

- to take all necessary measures to involve women and women's organizations in all policy and decision-making processes through consultations and enlarged participation of women in unions and other associations;

Employers and trade unions

- to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of responsibility within employers and workers organizations, as well as in their delegations in the context of collective bargaining;

ECE governments

- to encourage government-subsidised associations providing public services or implementing public policies to ensure equal participation of women and men in their decision-making bodies and gender equality in their action strategies.

Strategic direction 2: Ensuring equal opportunity in recruitment and career development

Employers and trade unions

- to take positive action, for example, developing equality plans for career development and gender balance in decision-making positions;

- to review the criteria for recruitment and appointment to high-level decision-making positions in the private sector and trade unions with a view to ensuring equal opportunity between women and men;

- to promote new ways of managing human resources and organizing work which facilitate access by women to positions of responsibility;

- to promote career advancement of women through, among others, measures aimed at equal sharing between women and men of work and family responsibilities;

Employers, trade unions and NGOs

- to facilitate women's career development in particular that of young women and women re-entering the labour force through mentoring, coaching, training and retraining;

ECE governments

- to make the public sector exemplary in terms of women's career development and a balanced distribution of decision-making positions, for instance through the definition of targets and the implementation of positive action;

- to stimulate and support actions taken by different actors to ensure equal participation of women and men in decision-making within their organizations.

V. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Introduction

The ECE member States reaffirm their previous commitments concerning institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming, expressed in the past at

various levels: the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the ECE Regional Platform for Action (Vienna, 1994) chapters III F, IV F and V A; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - critical area of concern H; the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on Institutional Mechanisms (1999) and the ECOSOC agreed conclusions on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations Systems (1997/2).

Members of the Council of Europe and of the European Union respectively reaffirm their previous commitments to Recommendation R(98) 14 on gender mainstreaming of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers; the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) and in particular its Article 3; the 1995 Council Resolution and the 1998 Council Regulation no 2836/98 on integrating gender issues in development cooperation and the 1996 European Commission Communication on incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all European Community policies and activities.

Positive developments:

- Further development, in some countries, of existing institutional mechanisms for gender equality, their restructuring and upgrading, and creation of new ones; wider acceptance of a gender mainstreaming approach; growing perception of gender equality and full enjoyment by women of their human rights as an objective per se and as a progress for humanity; awareness of the need for both specific policies for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming policies.

Obstacles and barriers:

- In some countries, lack, stagnation or weakening of national mechanisms; inadequate allocation of financial and human resources and marginalized location within the public administration; in some parts of the region, insufficient understanding of the political significance of gender equality issues as issues of democracy and human rights; consequently, lack of political will and necessary legal tools for establishing an effective gender mainstreaming strategy as well as lack of implementation of this strategy; in a large number of ECE countries, lack of recognition of gender equality as an integral part of good governance, democracy and human rights; slow and partial progress in implementing gender mainstreaming and in developing and analysing gender disaggregated statistics and prognoses; absence of benchmarks and indicators of gender equality.

In view of these trends, three key areas can be identified for future action.

A. Strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality

Strategic direction 1: Strengthening the mandate of institutional mechanisms

ECE governments

- to review the achievements and shortcomings of the institutional mechanisms created and developed since the Beijing Conference and to assess their impact on national policy-making;

- on the basis of the above assessment, to take new steps to strengthen these mechanisms by (i) ensuring that their mandates, roles and responsibilities are well defined and disseminated; (ii) providing them with the necessary sustainable human and financial means; and (iii) ensuring their presence at the highest level in all governmental departments and all other decision-making bodies so that gender mainstreaming is integrated in all policy areas and accountability of the government to gender equality policies is extended to these areas.

Strategic direction 2: Ensuring continued role and strength of institutional mechanisms and mainstreaming policies

ECE governments

- to recognize that the primary responsibility for gender mainstreaming rests with governments;

- to ensure that national mechanisms are placed at the highest possible political level;

- to ensure that changes in the political environment do not affect the existence, role and importance of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality;

- to diversify national mechanisms, including, if appropriate, through the creation of the position of ombudsperson, and to strengthen them through institution building.

Strategic direction 3: Providing support to national mechanisms in countries with economies in transition and developing countries

ECE governments and NGOs from Western Europe and North America

- to support capacity-building in those countries where the mechanisms are weak or are insufficiently developed, by allocating resources, if appropriate, to qualified national experts, including NGOs and other organizations in the civil society, through provision of finance and/or expertise, for example for training programmes, study tours, personnel exchange and advisory visits.

B. Developing tools for enforcing and monitoring policies of equality

Strategic direction 1: Developing a system of monitoring gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming

National mechanisms of ECE governments

- to propose a political agenda for initiating gender equality legislation and creating independent bodies so as to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of such legislation, where appropriate;

- to encourage the private sector and the social partners to set up mechanisms and to adopt positive action plans and gender equality plans;

ECE governments and multilateral organizations

- to collect and analyse gender disaggregated, comparable statistics;

- to accelerate the work on establishing a set of acceptable and comparable quantitative and qualitative gender equality indicators in order to develop, monitor, disseminate and evaluate gender-based policy implementation;

- to establish a number of gender equality benchmarks and time-bound targets in key policy areas at the national and international levels and to use them to monitor progress and to make this information widely accessible to the public;

Mechanisms in ECE governments, the private sector and social partners

- to establish gender equality plans where they do not exist and assess regularly their achievements.

Strategic direction 2: Advocating for a gender perspective in the resource allocation processes

Mechanisms in ECE governments (interministerial and ministerial)

- to make gender analyses of the budget allocations within and among all government sectors and on this basis to advise the budget planners in order to work towards an allocation of resources which is gender-sensitive and which provides the necessary financial and human resources for the achievement of gender equality targets.

Strategic direction 3: Making use of good practices in gender mainstreaming

Mechanisms in ECE governments

- to regularly gather and exchange good practices and lessons learned in integrating gender mainstreaming in policy development processes;

- from the above good practices, to draw lessons and case studies on gender mainstreaming; to disseminate them among relevant decision-makers and use them, for example, as a basis for training programmes for officials.

C. Strengthening the synergy between institutional mechanisms for gender equality and civil society

Strategic direction 1: Creating alliance with different actors within civil society through regular dialogue

National mechanisms in ECE governments

- to open up channels of communication with the different actors at the local, regional and international level - women's organizations and other NGOs, trade unions, employers organizations, consumer associations, other economic and social entities, academic institutions and the media - in order to gain from their experience and knowledge, as well as to obtain their support for the promotion of gender equality and the human rights of women, and benefit from their influence on decision-making bodies;

- to strengthen these ties and ensure their continuity through an established regular dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors; to include in this dialogue the diversity of women's interests and backgrounds;

- to secure continuity by encouraging the participation of young women;

NGOs and research institutions

- to share their experience and make known their gender research findings to the media, social partners, educational bodies and government authorities so that these various actors take them into account in their policies and practices;

- to organize themselves around specific gender issues and approach the relevant national mechanisms to discuss their positions, views and proposals thereon;

- to intensify the exchange of experiences across the borders and between subregions among gender sensitive organizations, including women's organizations.

Strategic direction 2: Supporting the activities of civil society organizations

Mechanisms in ECE governments

- to provide financial and technical support to autonomous organizations and institutions devoted to networking, research, analysis and evaluation of gender activities and issues and use their results to improve policies and programmes;

- to provide civil society with access to statistics and information regarding gender issues;

- to encourage the media to remove gender stereotypes and promote positive images of relationships between women and men, and girls and boys.

ANNEX II

REPORT OF THE NGO WORKING SESSION
17-18 January, Geneva

(organized in preparation for the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action)

NGOs AS PARTNERS ON THE WAY TO ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

More than 650 participants from 51 countries took part in the NGO Working Session on 17-18 January 2000, held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, preceding the three day Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Working Session was organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women and its Working Group on Women in the ECE Region, in cooperation with subregional networks and the ECE secretariat. Due to the generous contributions of donors, in particular UNDP, UNIFEM, the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation and the Danish Government, an unprecedented number of participants came from CEE and CIS Countries. It is important to note that it was not an NGO Forum similar to the one preceding the High-Level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Vienna in 1994. It was a Working Session, structured into Plenary, Workshop Sessions and Caucus Meetings to prepare NGOs to participate as equals in what essentially is an intergovernmental conference. This process was chosen to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on critical issues related to the four themes identified for this Preparatory Conference and to avoid having parallel meetings, a practice which carries the risk that NGOs and governments talk at, instead of dialoguing with, each other.

The meeting was opened by **Renate Bloem**, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. Guest Speakers included **Danuta Hübner**, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, **Patrice Robineau**, Senior Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, and **Patricia Flor,** Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. **Danielle Bridel**, Chairperson of the NGO Working Group on Women in the ECE concluded the Opening Ceremony.

There was one common line running throughout the meeting: NGOs asked their governments for a renewed commitment and show of **political will** to really go ahead and move towards full implementation of the Platform for Action and to adopt tools and targets to measure and monitor progress. They also asked themselves how they could help to foster the process of a needed **change in mentality**, so that society finally accepts women and men, boys and girls as persons of equal value. Time and again they stressed the need for **more resources** and **closer cooperation** between governments, NGOs, women's groups and other actors involved.

The Working Session voted unanimously in favour of a recommendation asking the ECE to adopt a **Preamble** to the Agreed Conclusions that reaffirms and recognizes that the Beijing

Platform for Action is based on an understanding of **women's rights as human rights** as a fundamental organizing principle. In order to arrive at specific recommendations the Working Session proceeded as follows:

I. On the first day the Working Session examined **Subregional Reports** of NGO coalitions from Canada, the US, the EU, the CEE and CIS countries.

II. Also during the first day, the Working Session held 17 **Workshops** on issues related to the four themes of the ECE meeting.

III. On the basis of recommendations from the workshops and the floor **Caucus Meetings**, during the second day, developed substantive proposals to complement the ECE Draft Agreed Conclusions. Each **Caucus** identified spoke-persons to present its conclusions to the ECE Plenary and Drafting Groups.

The **Closing Session** received Caucus reports. Closing remarks were made by Renate Bloem and **Yakin Ertürk,** Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women. Participants also organized lunchtime workshops on other critical issues (in particular reproductive health issues) not related to the four themes.

I. SUBREGIONAL NGO REPORTS

The report on **Canada,** presented by **Liz Philipose**, (Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action) emphasizes that country's strong international record in promoting the human rights of women with respect to progressive legislation, particularly on the International Criminal Court, CEDAW and the Optional Protocol, and gender and peace building programmes. Domestically there has also been a tradition of a strong civil society based on a conciliatory relationship between government and non-governmental sectors. Also cited was the high level of investment in the social sector. However, in the past 5 years the policies pursued have exacerbated **economic inequalities** at all levels: between rich and poor, between the employed and the unemployed and between part-time, casual, and full-time permanent workers. These inequalities are also evident between people with and without disabilities; aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples; between people under 25 and older than 25, between new immigrants, refugees and Canadian-born, between racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities and Canada's dominant groups; and both directly and indirectly between men and women, as women make up the majority of the most vulnerable groups mentioned.

The **US** report, presented by **June Zeitlin**, (WEDO) recognizes the significant accomplishments of the government, including the appointment of more women than ever before to top Cabinet, executive and judiciary positions. However, it also underscores the major challenges remaining as follows, i.e. poverty and the economy. Despite the current economic growth, more women are working at low-pay or minimum wage levels, hold part-time or temporary jobs without health insurance and adequate, affordable child-care. **Specific policies must be adopted to enable women to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to eliminate poverty,** especially in light of steps to eliminate guaranteed welfare benefits and social support programmes for poor women. The policies adopted must address the needs of all women with particular concern for

racial and **ethnic** minorities and **immigrant** women. The US must use its leadership position in the global economy to institute a **gender analysis of macroeconomic policies** at the World Trade Organization and other international institutions to ensure that women have access to private capital, technology and natural resources. Also demanded is: US ratification of CEDAW and CRC, and the strengthening of national institutional mechanisms for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

The **EU** report, presented by **Denise Fuchs**, (European Women's Lobby) expresses regret that only four themes are under discussion in this review process. It notes progress in gender awareness in the region, such as the recognition of gender equality as an issue for society as a whole and not only as a "women's issue". While affirmations of such principles as for example, **gender mainstreaming**, especially in the Treaty of Amsterdam, are welcomed, the report points to the need for these to be accompanied by specific measures and programmes for women. In order to measure and monitor progress, evaluation tools such as indicators, time-bound measures, gender disaggregated statistics and benchmarks are seen as absolutely essential. Some of the most serious areas of discrimination which have not yet been tackled, include: equal pay for equal value; better recognition and protection for women in "modernized" flexible work situations and for women working in the agricultural sector; better division of women and men in family responsibilities.

The report on **CEE** countries, presented by **Kinga Lohmann**, (KARAT) based on the outcome of a subregional UNIFEM-sponsored workshop, identifies the achievements as formulation of National Action Plans in almost all countries and the increased activities and a more effective cooperation and solidarity between women's organizations at local, regional and UN levels. However, **national machineries** are said to be **fragile**, vulnerable to political changes in most countries, and often lacking structures, mechanisms, accountability and sustainability. Also cited is a lack of regular, open and transparent channels of communication between governments and women's NGOs. Although some existing laws are designed to promote gender equality and combat violence against women, implementation is poor. Most crucial is the lack of resources for both governments and NGOs to implement the National Plan of Action.

Similarly, the report on **CIS countries** (plus Turkey and Mongolia), presented by **Nurgul Djanaeva**, (Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan) based on the outcome of another subregional UNIFEM-sponsored workshop, identifies the main achievements as follows: increased access to international information and new forms of cooperation between all involved in gender equality; the establishment of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality and gender mainstreaming; the positive role of governments in promoting increased gender awareness; and the growing number of NGOs and their increasing capacity for action with respect to the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming. Serious obstacles were seen in: **deterioration** in women's **economic status** and rapid increase of **unemployment** among women; **social disruption** and dislocation; decline in the number of women in political offices; insufficient human and financial resources leading to a lack of sustainability and inadequate mechanisms for implementation of existing legislation as well as lack of gender awareness among the general public.

II. WORKSHOPS

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

- Women and the Economy and E-Commerce - (*International Federation of University Women*)

- Women and the Economy: Training and Consulting - (*Il Cenacolo*)

- Measuring the unpaid work and production in the households - (*Finnish NGO Committee on Beijing + 5*)

  (The three organizers of the above agreed to discuss their topics in one common workshop)

- The impact of Globalization on Women in the Region - (*Center for Women's Global Leadership, WEDO, GROOTS*)

- Women and the Economy: Women Responsible for Food Production - (*NGO Working Group on Nutrition (Geneva)*)

WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

A. Violence against women and girls

- Violence against Women - (*Women's Council in Denmark*)

- Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking - Prevention and Action - (*UNICEF, NGO Working Group on the Girl Child (Geneva)*)

B. Women and girls in armed conflict situations

- Consequences of Armed Conflicts in Balkan Women's Lives - (*KARAT*)

- Health Effects of Nuclear Radiation in War and Conflict Situations - (*WILPF*)

- The Reproductive Health and Rights' Consequences of Violence Against Women in Situations of Armed Conflicts

  (*Center for Reproductive Law and Policy and the International Health Coalition*)

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

- Women in Power and Decision Making - (*WEDO*)

- Women in Power and Decision Making Process - (*KARAT*)

  (The two organizers agreed to discuss their topics in one common workshop)

- How Youth Organizations Promote Girls' and Young Women's Empowerment - (*WAGGGS)*

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

- Strengthening Partnership between NGOs and National Machineries - (*KARAT)*

- Promouvoir les femmes par le biais des ONGs de femmes dans le dialogue civil - (*European Women's Lobby)*

  (The two organizers agreed to discuss their topics in one common workshop)

- Institutional Mechanisms "The World Conference on Women in 2005" - (*Finnish NGO Committee on Beijing + 5)*

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

- Human Rights Perspectives on the Platform and ECE Themes - (*Center for Women's Global Leadership)*

- Mainstreaming Gender into General Education - (*Finnish NGO Committee on Beijing + 5)*

OTHER TOPICS

- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the ECE Region - (*CLEF, USPDA, IPPF EN)*

- World March of Women in the Year 2000 - (*World March of Women)*

- Les Femmes face aux intégrismes religieux - (*European Women's Lobby)*

III. CAUCUS MEETINGS

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

A significant breakthrough has been achieved both in process and in substance at this session on Women and the Economy toward further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Thanks to the Chair, Patricia Flor, who gave real meaning to partnership in action, NGOs had a broad opportunity, as stakeholders, to have a voice in the government discussions at plenary and drafting sessions. NGOs were equally important individually and as a caucus group. They were essential in providing the substantive input into the final document presented to the ECE Preparatory Meeting, which will be presented at the CSW and to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Beijing Plus 5 in June 2000.

On behalf of our caucus, we express our heartfelt thanks to the leadership of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women and the ECE Working group. The many faceted areas

composing the advancement of women in the economy need to be addressed individually. We would have liked to have had more time to address the issues. However, because of the positive outcome, we are happy to present the results of our work which identified 41 proposals. The Caucus felt most strongly about the following issues: economic inequality between men and women and amongst women; electronic commerce technology and training; labour rights, unionization and social protection, including ratification of relevant ILO conventions; ensuring that bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade agreements respect equality; negotiable flexible working arrangements; gender inequality in the labour market; macroeconomic policies and globalization. The following recommendations were accepted:

- Recognition of the importance of a gender perspective in the development of macroeconomic policy

- Recognition that there are challenges and opportunities for women to increase their participation in the global economy and to extend access to decision-making positions

- Introduction of legislation to provide adequate maternity protection to all women and to prevent, prohibit and redress discrimination against women in recruitment and working conditions

- Reaffirmation of previous commitments concerning equal participation of women and men in the economy and further agreement that all social, economic and trade policies should be coherent and respect existing commitments to gender equality and the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Rights at Work

- Recognition of growing public awareness and support for the protection of human rights in the developing global economy, in particular as it relates to trade liberalization

- Removal of barriers to unionization of women

- Negotiable flexible working time and enactment of policies to enable women and men to balance paid and unpaid work and to fulfil family responsibilities with particular difficulties in achieving this balance

- Indicators to identify gaps in living conditions and to publish the results of monitoring

- Promotion of women entrepreneurship through, inter alia, access to risk capital, credit schemes and other funding

- Affirmation of active partnerships with NGOs, notably in eliminating discrimination in the labour market and promoting gender equality in social protection

Outstanding Issues for Further Advocacy

- We regret that the Drafting Committee did not include the Caucus recommendation to address specific problem areas other than gender such as the double disadvantage of gender combined with race, ethnicity, religion, disability immigration status, age or sexual orientation

- Ratifying and implementing the equality conventions and conventions covering disadvantaged groups such as migrant women workers and their families; internally displaced women workers; sharing of work and family responsibilities

- Restructuring of WB, IMF, and WTO in keeping with existing international commitments to gender justice and poverty eradication, in particular women's economic and social rights

- Within the context of globalization, adopt proposals to regulate the international market, including the Tobin Tax which generates a special fund giving women preferred access

- To cancel the debt of the 53 poorest countries

- To provide rural women with technical support for business opportunities and environmentally safe agricultural practices

- To enable women to control their fertility in order to combine work and family responsibilities.

Conclusion: The Caucus on Women and Economy wishes to emphasize that the effective implementation of our recommendations will depend on political will, financial resources and the adoption of the ECE agreed conclusions in all the caucuses.

Convenor: **Conchita Poncini** (International Federation of University Women)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This large NGO Caucus with over 150 participants agreed on a 10-page report with recommendations for amendments and additions to the draft ECE Agreed Conclusions on Violence Against Women. Caucus work was based on reports from three NGO workshops the prior day as well as proposals from the floor. The Caucus was pleased with the innovative and productive process of presenting our recommendations to an informal negotiating session with governments. Unfortunately, we did not have the final draft of the agreed conclusions when we first met and our report was long, so our recommendations had to be adapted and condensed quickly, leaving some issues behind. Nevertheless, a significant number of Caucus suggestions were incorporated into the final text of the Agreed Conclusions including:

- A priority was that **all forms of violence against women and girls in the private and public sphere** by state and non-state actors be addressed and understood as **basic violations of human rights principles.** "All forms of violence against women" was added to the text

several times. NGOs sought a comprehensive and detailed explanation of violence against women and managed to get sexual violence, including in marriage, as well as incest, marital rape, so-called "honour" crimes, forced marriages, and abuse of elderly women cited as well.

- Concern for the need to address specific forms and repercussions of **violence against girls and minors** was added to the document's basic principles

- The **link between violence against women and health** was furthered by a reaffirmation of the ICPD (Cairo) Plus Five report as well as references to the physical and mental health consequences of violence

- Calls for **sex education and anti-violence curricula** were incorporated, as were a number of measures for **preventing violence and securing safety** for victims

- The NGO call for developing "**an international consensus on uniform indicators**" to measure violence was affirmed along with considering the establishment of a readily accessible **global data base** on all forms of violence against women

- The Caucus' concern for **diversity and violence against all women** was partially adopted. The list of factors that intersect with violence noted in the Caucus introduction was not included, but a similar list was incorporated into the overall preamble to the ECE Agreed Conclusions

- While not all references to **race and ethnicity** were taken, the call for support to NGOs includes "for programmes to **combat racist-inspired violence** against women and girls" and providing victims of domestic violence with **access to interpreters** was accepted with the caveat of "where possible".

- A call "to review and **repeal laws that criminalize homosexuality**, since such laws contribute to creating a climate which encourages violence against women who are, or are perceived to be, lesbians" was accepted by governments as well as the Holy See, without reservations.

For the Agreed Conclusions on **stopping trafficking**, Caucus proposals focused on protecting the human rights of and providing services to the women trafficked as well as on ending the practice. An agreement was made in the caucus not to address the divisive issue of the definition of trafficking. NGOs succeeded in adding a call for **provision of sexual and reproductive health services** to the text as well as a clause about **extending witness protection programs to victims testifying against traffickers** and allowing **victims to remain in the country of destination** "in appropriate cases". One remaining concern not taken up by governments is that anti-trafficking measures can be used to mask anti-immigration policies.

Some other areas of concern not incorporated into the Agreed Conclusions include: extending **asylum on the grounds of gender-based persecution**, providing independent **residency permits to immigrant women at the time of initial entry**, examining the role of **the media in perpetuating violence**, and detailing more specific commitments to the **provision of adequate resources for combating all forms of violence against women**. There are many more

recommendations in the full report of the Caucus. Finally, the experience of NGOs working with governments in the informal negotiation sessions was positive and our proposals were treated with respect - something we hope will be repeated at the Beijing Plus Five Preparatory Committee in New York in March.

Convenor: **Charlotte Bunch** (Center for Women's Global Leadership)

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Meeting of the NGO Caucus on Women and Girls in Armed Conflict was held on 18 January 2000 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. Participants represented all areas of ECE Region.

The basic document for the Caucus was the Draft of Agreed Conclusion **Women in Armed Conflict,** dated 17 January 2000 as well as the results from the workshop held one day earlier. Discussion was mostly focused on the contents and issues of the background documents and not exclusively on its wording.

The NGO Caucus stated that: "The international community and member states must recognize that women in conflict regions are not only victims of armed conflicts, but also partners for non-violent conflict prevention and resolutions, peacemaking and reconstruction."

One of the first important comments referred to the title of the document in which the category of "girls" proposed to be integrated. The idea was accepted by NGOs as well as by governmental representatives and the title was changed to **"Women and Girls in Armed Conflict Situations"**.

Many debates stressed the importance of ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW as well as the other international legal instruments such as The Rome Statute of the INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC). In the final draft the ratification of the Optional Protocol was accepted and integrated. Caucus debaters also highlighted the importance of monitoring the implementation of sets of standards, international documents and legislation with follow-up reports. This suggestion was also incorporated in the draft.

Another issue highlighted in debate during the Caucus meeting was health. With some modification it was drafted in the final version, too.

Another emerging issue in the countries affected by armed conflicts is the issue of minority women and girls who are often doubly exposed to violence, uncertainty and discrimination. The language was given and accepted by the governments with the exemption of the use of "minority" which was changed to "marginalized" in the final draft.

The new paragraph on "given that women and girls in countries adjacent to conflict areas have been vulnerable to physical and economic threads, the international community should ensure the protection of all women and girls in neighbouring countries" was supported by the governments however, in modified language.

One of the main concerns of the NGO Caucus was the importance of gender sensitive training and education of all peace-keeping forces and personnel which was accepted by the governmental representatives.

Another issue was related to a status of refugees and displaced persons, e.g. to ensure the right to dignity and protection upon and after voluntary return. The proposal was accepted with little modification.

The NGOs as well as governments recognize the importance of setting benchmarks, indicators and deadlines in monitoring women participation in all peace-related processes.

The NGO caucus very strongly formulated the additional paragraph on ECE countries to commit themselves to demilitarization, including significant reduction of military expenditures, support of women's NGOs as watchdogs and development of alternatives to military service and proposed the language for it. This was not fully accepted by governmental representatives.

During the Caucus meeting as a result of very vivid and contributing discussion 6 topics were identified and the same number of persons were appointed as speakers to the following ECE Panel. They were as follows:

Widney Brown, Human Rights Watch, USA, speaking on ICC and the Optional Protocol to the women's convention;

Tomka Dilevska, Union of Women's Organization of Macedonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, speaking on the impact of the armed conflict on all women and girls in affected areas;

Valentina Leskaj, Albanian Family Planning Association, Albania, speaking on health consequences for women in armed conflicts;

Erika Papp, Women's Studies and Creativity, Subotica, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, speaking on recognizing and promoting the role of all women in peace processes;

Elmira Suleymanova, Azerbaijan Women and Development Centre, Azerbaijan, speaking on research into the impact of armed conflict on women;

Michaela Told, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Austria, speaking on conflict prevention.

NGO Caucus expressed appreciation to international agencies, especially to UNIFEM for technical support and assistance, mainly in preparation for the conference in CEE and CIS regions.

Convenor: **Zuzana Jezerska** (KARAT)

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

1. Absolute need of a Fifth World Conference on women in 2005 to ensure the continuity of the process towards gender equality; a process which is far from being completed.

2. Mechanisms need to be strengthened. To this aim, the following recommendations are needed:

   - Disaggregated, comparable statistics

   - Benchmarks

   - Time-bound targets

   In the end mechanisms' staff, experts and leadership should be gender balanced.

   A. Therefore mainstreaming gender in general education is a necessary start to develop a culture of equality and to enable boys and girls to assume their new roles as equal partners.

   (The new contract between men and women must not be as the previous one, imposed by one part on the other, but should be agreed by both parts).

   B. The process towards gender balanced mechanisms needs careful monitoring so that women do not lose their few leading posts without gaining access into male dominated institutions.

   C. To secure continuity and to ensure that the work is carried forward into the future, young women must be adequately represented in all bodies, institutions and NGOs, taking part in the emergent civil dialogue.

3. Governments should be made accountable to NGOs for implementation of their commitments through machinery on different levels: independent across parties, commissions, parliaments at national level, at forums next to the World Conferences and public hearings for transparency at international level.

4. Time bound targets should be set according to the current conditions in the subregions and in individual countries. For instance, mechanisms need to be created and strengthened in the CIS and in Central and Eastern European countries, while the next step in the European Union is the insertion of an article institutionalising the civil dialogue in the revised Treaty of Amsterdam.

5. Women's NGOs should be provided with the necessary resources by a line in the financial Bill as a just return of their contribution as tax payers to the State budget. International organizations, mainly the UN and the European Union, but also specialised international agencies, should intensify their support exchanges of experiences across the borders and between the subregions, organising and facilitating conferences, seminars, multilateral consultations among women's NGOs.

6. Governments should recognize that participation of NGOs in the decision-making process is a "*conditio sine qua non*" to improve the functioning of democracy; the implementation of a civil dialogue must become one of the criteria to be fulfilled by the EU-applicant countries.

A number of these recommendations have been included in the Agreed Conclusions; some have been toned down, others refused. The most important recommendation of the Caucus (1 above) has not (yet) been accepted, despite it having been unanimously adopted by the Caucus participants.

Convenor: **Charlotte Thibault** (Comité Québécois de Suivis de Beijing)

WOMEN AND DECISION-MAKING

The Caucus on women in power and decision-making emphasizes that the following points must be taken into account.

It is vital that a gender perspective and gender analysis, based on national internationally comparable gender disaggregated data, should be used as a common basis for the text.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A.

- Equality of education for men and women should be ensured from primary school onwards
- Opinion surveys on the role of women in decision-making require that women should hold positions of power in the media
- Governments and political parties should recognize the essential role played by women's NGOs and promote partnership between the three actors
- A strategy should be devised to promote a political and institutional culture conducive to decision-making by women

B.

- The Caucus emphasized the specific democratic role played by political parties and recalled that, in several countries, they enjoyed public funding, part of which represented taxes paid by women. They are therefore under a duty to ensure parity in their own structures and in society
- A ceiling should be established by law for electoral campaign expenditure
- The Caucus reaffirmed that 50/50 parity is a basic principle underlying the democratic process. Member States should therefore take constitutional, legislative and other measures without delay to ensure such parity, as has already been done in several countries of the European Union

Certain countries, where for various reasons, the participation of women in power has declined, could achieve parity in stages: at least 30 per cent of women in the next elections and parity in subsequent elections. Parity should be required in local, regional and national elections. Collateral measures are vital, such as the status of those elected (remuneration for elective functions, leisure time and child care, dovetailing elective responsibilities and professional functions, etc.), and prohibition of holding two offices at the same time

C.

- At least 30 per cent of the members of committees or commissions, including those of international organizations, participating in the political decision-making process at all levels should be women, by 2005 and quotas tending towards parity should be established

Adequate representation of various ethnic, social or age groups as well as handicapped women should be ensured in decision-making processes as a whole. Positive action to combat racism and exclusion should be taken.

Access of women to economic and social power.

The Caucus recalls that, apart from the competence they acquire as a result of their education and university training, women possess other specific qualifications reflecting their way of life. This should be taken into account in methods of recruiting and testing candidates for positions of authority. Men and women should be equally represented on panels evaluating the results of competitive examinations.

The Caucus also emphasized the importance of scientific training in achieving economic and social positions of responsibility in enterprises or positions as advisors to authorities which formulate policies. Examples have been given especially in the medical field.

Many of the proposals made by NGOs have been taken into account in the conclusions approved.

Convenor: **Marie-Claude Vayssade** (European Women's Lobby)

There was a consensus to highlight the special situation of countries in transition through the

STATEMENT FROM NGOs OF CEE AND CIS
DISTINGUISHING COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION

We, the women of CEE and CIS, urge the representatives of ECE member states to ensure that the particular challenges and recommendations of our subregion are fully understood.

In particular, we bring the following issues to your attention:

- The democracies of our region remain fragile - often lacking structures, mechanisms, accountability, transparency and sustainability. Few women and women's NGOs are

represented in policy and decision-making forums. The protection of women's human rights is not guaranteed for many reasons, including lack of institutional mechanisms, limited capacity, failure to understand the importance of gender aspects of all public policies, lack of financial resources and weak political will. Further, our countries lack effective legal measures and institutional mechanisms to protect women's human rights and gender equality.

- One common legacy of our former political systems is that local and national governments lack experience collaborating with civil society. Many have not yet recognized the important role played by women's NGOs. But it is noteworthy that within a relatively short period of time, women's NGOs in particular have become visible and committed representatives of civil society. In some cases, women's NGOs are providing services without appropriate government support, including financing.

- In the search for new national identities, there are strong forces advocating patriarchal traditions and models that deny women's rights and limit their roles in society. In some countries, women are pushed into the private sphere, relegated back to family responsibilities. Further, as new democracies allow greater religious expression and freedom, there are some who take advantage of these freedoms to curtail women's rights.

- Economic opportunities of women are shrinking in comparison with those of men. In some countries, women are among the first to lose their jobs, and the last to obtain new employment. Many women are working in jobs that do not utilize their education and professional skills. Many struggle in the informal sector, without benefits and protection. In some countries, women are frequently exposed to sexual harassment while also struggling to maintain their jobs. In most countries of our region, there is not a sufficient legal framework to guarantee gender equality and to protect women from gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.

- The process of privatization in our region has often had negative impacts on women - both in terms of gaining access to assets and in terms of the practices of the new private sector. Further, there has been no monitoring by government to determine the gender impacts of this unique historical process.

- Today's elderly are suffering rapid impoverishment from fraying and diminishing safety nets. Women in the region face impending poverty because their unemployment, underemployment, and informal-sector employment during the years of transition will deprive them of their right to receive equal pension benefits and to age with dignity.

- The emergency nature of armed conflicts threatens the democratic transitions of countries-in-conflict and their neighbours because they draw international resources away from development needs to peacemaking and peacekeeping.

- Following the collapse of communism and a lack of new identity, a sudden upsurge of nationalism is threatening diversity, tolerance and peace in our region. These forces have already proved to be destabilizing. Having already destroyed many lives, they pose ongoing threats. Resources are needed to support positive use of education and media for mutual understanding and reconciliation.

- Violence against women in our region is widespread. As yet, our governments have not taken adequate action to combat and prevent violence, and to provide resources for education, shelter and legal, psychological and medical assistance for victims. Further, the laws are not sufficient to protect women. In cases of attempts to rely on the law, women often find that the courts and law enforcement agencies are not prepared to provide gender-sensitive implementation.

- Civil society is new, inexperienced and under-funded. Plummeting levels of support from ECE member states, international organizations and donors jeopardize implementation of the goals and commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action in our countries. Whereas women were previously silenced by political forces, women's voices may now be silenced by insufficient resources. We appeal to donor organizations and countries to include women's organizations as equal partners in all negotiations and assistance; to support gender mainstreaming in all foreign assistance; and to maintain, and even strengthen, technical and financial assistance to countries in transition and to NGOs in order to enable them to achieve their goals. The empowerment of women in our region can be strengthened by equal partnerships with donors and other ECE partners. It is through such partnerships that women and women's NGOs have the opportunity to build skills that will serve them in public arenas.

- Throughout our subregion, economic conditions have caused many women to be migrants within their own countries. Increased poverty in our subregion now demands special poverty reduction measures for rural women and internal migrants. Further, women seeking employment are increasingly vulnerable to trafficking and other exploitative practices.

- Women's health, particularly reproductive health - which is a basic foundation for women to exercise their other human rights - is seriously neglected. Moreover, women's reproductive rights, particularly the right to legal and safe abortions and access to family planning and sexual education, are being constantly challenged. Such lack of information and education places women in our region in greater risk regarding HIV/AIDS.

- Following the previous subregional preparatory meetings, women of our subregion's NGOs recognize the importance of their full and effective participation at all international levels. Women from our subregion lack experience with international organizations and processes. It would be helpful to make purposeful efforts to open up political space for us to cooperate with the rest of the ECE region.

- Having been isolated for many years from the international community, women from NGOs are not ready at this time to speak out effectively, as well as to reach mutual understanding in English or French languages. For women from the CIS, we ask the international community's support and understanding in addressing our need for regular translation and interpretation into Russian at all international and regional conferences.

We, women of countries in transition, want to participate fully in building genuine democracies. We are working hard to build cultures of peace. We appeal to governments and the international community to help us to work with our governments to promote and protect women's human rights and gender equality.